METHODS AND APPARATUS FOR STORING, UPDATING, TRANSPORTING, AND LAUNCHING PERSONALZED COMPUTER SETTINGS AND APPLICATIONS

ABSTRACT: A method and an apparatus for transporting user-specific preferences, settings and information from a first computer to a second computer are described. One version of the system comprises a pocket-sized USB flash memory device (USB Drive), which contains an application program and non-volatile data storage. When the USB Drive is connected to a first computer, the program contained in the USB Drive identifies and copies the user-specific information associated with user-selected applications, such as the user's Microsoft Office files, email account settings (including user name, password, POP and STMP servers, etc.), address book, sent and received emails, etc. into the USB Drive. The user can easily transport the USB Drive on a key chain, for example. When the user plugs the USB Drive into a second computer, such as a publicly-accessible computer in a hotel, airport, or computer lab, and chooses to launch an application, such as Outlook Express, the application will automatically load the user's information from the USB Drive. As a result, the user is able to do work on the publicly-accessible machine as if he/she is working on his/her personal machine at home or in the office. New information, such as new emails received, is automatically saved to the USB Drive. When the user later plugs the USB Drive into his/her everyday computer, the information in the everyday computer is updated using the new information stored in the USB Drive. From the user's perspective, this new method and apparatus automatically transforms

any computer he/she decides to use into one that is cosmetically and functionally similar to his/her everyday machine.